

THE CANDY KITCHEN

You wrap the salt water taffy -- each piece
with a swift twist of the wrists.
Long rows of the sticky stuff stretch
from the taffy twister machine.

It is summer and the nubile Canucks from
Montreal and Quebec in their g-string suits
saunter in and out of the candy shop -- their
hands and mouths busy with deep toppings
and milky chocolates.

Your boss, with eyeball to peephole, shuffles
his feet in an Arthur Murray step and
twists his apron into a knot.

The assistant cook, Rollie, toils at
a fuse box in the alley behind the shop.

Michelle is from Biddeford and you love to
kiss her more than anything. The Mass at her
church is all in French and you love the
French about her. She wants to fly for
Air Canada.

Your boss shuffles his feet and grunts and
you shift your eyes to the clock. Your
wrists go methodical twist.

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

You meet her in the bay of the Phillips 66
service station in Cape Elizabeth. You,
the gasoline jockey from an upper lower class
immigrant family who survive the inner city
blight. She, the upper middle class beauty
from the silver lined shores of the Cape.

You don't even remember the amenities. You
service her sports car and breathlessly
arrange to meet at her parents' home the
following Saturday afternoon. Apropos of

nothing but awkward silences over tea and cookies amid splendor and light, you say: When Worlds Collide. She puzzles over this, prefers Thoreau's Walden to anything by Jane Austen. You haven't read Austen but have seen the Laurence Olivier movie. You wonder if she has a wealthy aunt as you sit on an early Victorian couch, she on a Colonial rocker. Out the bay window the waves explode and spread in a lacy fanwork over the rocky ledges. You wonder if Walden has ever been made into a movie.

MANPOWER

You and this black guy are assigned a day long job. You end up unloading a boxcar full of pipe for the Portland Plumbing & Oil Co. He sits on a stack of pipe in the cool of the shade as you walk by with a 25 lb. elbow and says: Hey, man, wha' chew doin' bustin' you' ass fuh? In high school, the star

basketball, football, baseball & swimming star was black, and although you shared classes together, you never actually were introduced. He was school mascot -- pampered by teachers, coaches, and students (the talented and the rich). He was different and he was good. In a bar in Long Beach,

long after you've often reminisced of lost innocence in Maine, you lift a few with a gaggle of sailors who would lack a coherent vocabulary if the word nigger were removed from their mouths. At this point in your

life you decide to say something about bigotry, equality of opportunity, and national security.